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Examiner

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Tri-county opens doors

Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties skip ahead in Governor Inslee's reopening plan. Locals now wait for Phase II criteria to publish

RaeLynn Ricarte
Statesman-Examiner

Last week, the Washington Department of Health granted a variance allowing Ferry and Pend Oreille counties to move into Phase 2 of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stevens County's variance request was put on

hold until Monday to meet Gov. Jay Inslee's criteria that it be three weeks between reported COVID-19 cases. On May 11 the request was granted.

However, Stevens County Commission Chair Wes McCart said Monday that officials were still waiting on the guidelines that Inslee says must be adhered to in Phase II.

"I think this is a huge step for our counties," said McCart. "It's frustrating that we are still waiting for the guidelines, but we are already working on what we have to do for Phase III."

Inslee has planned for Phase II to begin in populated urban areas on June 1.

Ferry and Pend Oreille counties were among 10 that Inslee said could fast-

track their reopening plans due to a low number of COVID-19 cases. To date, Ferry has one case and Pend Oreille has two.

Stevens County was not on that list because it had nine reported cases and one death. The last case in Stevens was reported on April 20.

The commission worked with Northeast Tri County

Health District to submit the variance requests for all three counties.

The package had to include a statement from local hospitals certifying their bed capacity and supplies of masks, gloves and gowns. Plans also had to show adequate testing, care and containment of new

See REOPEN, Page A2

Price hike hits local meat shop

RaeLynn Ricarte
Statesman-Examiner

Gallo's saw a 40% overnight spike in meat prices last week, which the owners say is tied to the closure of packing plants across the nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We haven't had any trouble getting product so far, but suppliers are telling us that it's starting to tighten up," said Kim Gallo, who runs the Colville business with father, Tony.

They don't want to fuel a sense of panic that meat is going to be impossible to get because they buy from Northwest producers who have plenty of stock to sell. However, they said people are likely to pay more until the situation with the meatpacking plants is stabilized.

"We are not raising prices, our prices are going up because of the conditions," said Kim.

In recent weeks, more than a dozen major plants have shut down to stop the spread of coronavirus among workers. The vast majority of chicken, hog and beef processing takes place in a small number of plants controlled by several large corporations, namely Tyson Foods, Smithfield Foods, JBS USA Holdings Inc., and Cargill Inc.

President Donald Trump has invoked the Defense Product Act to keep meat processing plants open during the current crisis.

"Such closures threaten the continued functioning of the national meat and poultry supply chain, undermining critical infrastructure during the national emergency," said Trump.

"Given the high volume of meat and poultry processed by many facilities, any unnecessary closures can quickly have a

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BEE DAZZLED

Photo by RaeLynn Ricarte

Doug Johnson of Marcus has raised western honeybees most of his life and studied hive culture to gain understanding about the queen, workers and drones interact.

Giant hornets are only one threat facing U.S. honeybee population

RaeLynn Ricarte
Statesman-Examiner

Asian giant hornets are being trapped near Blaine in the northwestern corner of Washington, but they aren't the biggest threat to the western honeybee population, says Doug Johnson of Marcus.

He has spent most of his life caring for bees and said the biggest threat they face today is the ap-

plication of chemicals in orchards and yards to kill noxious weeds and harmful pests.

"They love dandelions and it's frustrating that so many cities kill these flowers because they are also killing the bees," said Johnson.

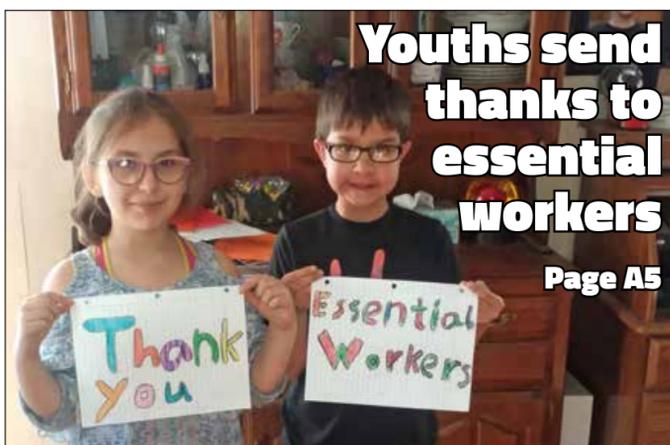
Another contributor to bee deaths, he said, is the emergence of a parasitic mite named Varroa Destructor that attaches to the bodies of its host and then

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Photo by RaeLynn Ricarte

Each virgin queen is marked by Doug Johnson before being introduced to a hive. She will be mate shortly after arrival and spend the rest of her life laying eggs.



Youths send thanks to essential workers

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Chewelah festival canceled

Brandon Hansen
Chewelah Independent

Community Celebrations, the local group of organizers that put together Chataqua each year, couldn't even meet in a normal setting to vote on the cancellation of Chewelah's biggest event.

Social distancing outside, many feet apart last week, they voted anomalously to not hold Chataqua this year in the Chewelah City Park. Health

concerns from the COVID-19 pandemic along with the issues of organizing a large public event when restrictions are unclear and timelines are even muddier were among the chief reasons that Community Celebrations decided to cancel the event.

The chief issues stem from a large number of people coming into town—a Chataqua weekend can see 20-40,000 people walk through the park—and vendors coming from other states.

The United States currently has over a million confirmed cases of COVID-19, with many more asymptomatic cases unconfirmed, along with a death toll of over 81,000

Stevens County and Chewelah have been relatively spared from the pandemic, with only nine confirmed cases in the county — no new cases in the past three weeks — and just one death.

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(USPS 520-680)

BUSINESS

Gallo's

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large effect on the food supply chain."

When meatpacking plants get back to running at full volume, Kim said it is still going to take weeks to meet customer demand. She said limited supplies will drive up prices for at least several months.

There could be times that some cuts of meats are less available in the supply chain, say the Gallos, but there will always be product.

"Don't panic, we will get through this," she said.

The Gallos understands that people feel safer when they have a freezer full of meat, something they intend to keep providing.

The economic downturn in the beef market is especially tough on ranchers, said Kim, because 60% of cattle are sold off to restaurants, which have been shuttered for weeks — except for takeout and deliveries — to help reduce spread of the virus. She said about 10% of beef is exported and trade with China is way down at this time. The remaining 30% of the market is retail sales.

Slower lines in meatpacking plants means less product makes it to market, which has led many livestock owners to euthanize millions of animals that

can't get processed and are too costly to keep feeding, said Kim.

The break in the beef supply chain could go on for awhile, say agricultural economists, because it takes about nine months to get a hog to slaughter weight, but cows can take up to 24 months. So, when herds are eliminated, it affect a farm's productivity for years.

Although cattlemen can wait another year to sell a steer and still realize a profit because the meat quality remains high, Kim said hogs and chicken producers do not have that option because the quality of meat deteriorates over time, which makes it unmarketable. Or, the animal gains weight and becomes too big to be processed in standardized plants.

To prevent a repeat of the panic that drove people to clear shelves of toilet paper, many stores are restricting the amount of meat that people can buy.

Kim said Gallo's does not have that policy because they are confident that coolers and freezers can be kept stocked. And, by the way, they also began carrying toilet paper as shelves in "big box" stores emptied.

The idea has been to keep things calm by reassuring customers that their basic needs will be provided.

The Gallos are especially concerned right now that higher meat prices could be a double whammy for struggling restaurants who



Statesman-Examiner photo

Tony and Kim Gallos stand in the Washington Street store that is filled with high-quality aged meats and other food supplies.

have had little or no revenue coming in for weeks.

They are grateful that business has been able to continue pretty much as usual at Gallo's through the crisis.

"We've been very, very fortunate here," said Kim.

This past month, they have had more customers come from Spokane, Lone and Cusick to get high quality aged meats at the as well as milk, potatoes, cheese and other supplies.

"I think people like that

we are not a big corporation that we are a privately owned business," said Tony.

Kim said because customers come in at staggered times, the store has always operated within social distancing guidelines. And hygiene has always been a top priority, so it remains a safe environment.

Gallo's is located at 880 South Washington Street and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

Kim said it is more difficult to get through the area now that the city has undertaken a major construction project on Railroad Avenue, but there are signs up now that direct traffic to the meat market.

Tony opened the store in the mid-1970s and Kim has been an active partner for 25 years.

"This is an old-fashioned operation," he said. "We've held the standard that what worked yesterday still works today."

The big lesson to be learned from this unprecedented situation, say the Gallos, is that people need to support local ranchers and businesses.

"If people want to stock up, a lot of our ranchers are going to be selling off cattle this fall," said Kim.

She said Gallo's will be happy to introduce community members to a rancher in the area, and to process the livestock they buy.

She and Tony can be reached at 509-684-3448.

Bees

Continued from Front Page

weakens it by sucking fat cells. The mite can also cause larvae to hatch with wing deformities that bring an early death.

Since 1998, all of these factors have led to a syndrome that scientists call "colony collapse disorder." There has been a drastic disappearance of bee populations around the globe. That has led to a 20% increase in the cost to farmers of renting bees to provide pollination services.

The rapid decline of bees could become major disruption in crop production, warn scientists.

The key to ensuring the survival of bees is to educate people about their place in the ecosystem for better protection, and to breed bees to be more resilient, said Johnson.

He has been working the past several years to breed bees that can survive the long, hard cold winters of Northeastern Washington so he doesn't have to stress colonies out by transporting them to the California almond orchards and other warmer winter locations.

Johnson is also working to establish colonies with a strong queen that can maximize their health.

"She decides what the colony needs," he said. "She decides whether to lay eggs for more workers or drones."

A healthy colony will have strong female worker bees, who are born sterile to serve the queen but not compete with her. They not only make honey, but seal and cleanse the hive with propolis, also known as bee glue, that is a resinous mixture that bees produce by mixing saliva and beeswax with sap gathered from tree buds and other botanical sources.

Propolis closes small gaps in the hive and is an antifungal and antibacterial agent. While foraging, workers harvest pollen and nectar, while also collecting water and tree resin necessary for the production of propolis.

The queen is the mother to all or most of the bees in the hive because she lives two to three years and a worker bee lives about six weeks on average. The queen's every need is provided by workers while she lays about 1,500 eggs per day.

A drone is a male honey bee and the sum of his existence is to mate with an unfertilized queen and then die.



Raelynn Ricarte photo

Doug Johnson teaches Joe Graves about the art of beekeeping.

"It's kind of a good way to go," said Johnson.

Drones are larger than workers, although smaller than the queen. They must be strong enough to accompany the queen in flight for the mating ritual.

While in the hive, drones depend on the worker bees to feed them. They can help keep the colony cool by fanning the air with their wings.

Drones either die off or are ejected from the hive by worker bees in late autumn so they don't deplete food supplies.

Johnson said any fertilized egg has the potential to become a queen or a worker. Queen larvae are fed only royal jelly, a protein-rich secretion from glands on the heads of young workers.

Worker larvae are also fed royal jelly for the first few days but then are given a mixture of nectar and pollen known as "bee bread."

As a result of the difference in diet, the queen will develop into a sexually mature female, unlike the workers.

"A queen is not born, she is made," said Johnson.

If more than one queen hatches, there will be a fight (stinging) among rivals to the death, he said. That is nature's way of giving the lead role in the hive to the strongest bee.

"Two girls in one house doesn't work," joked Johnson.

Unlike worker bees, the queen's stinger is not barbed and she is able to sting repeatedly without dying.

When the queen ages, workers will rear her daughter and the two females will live peacefully together until the virgin flies off to mate six to 10 days after she emerges.

Johnson said the old queen is likely killed by workers unless she swarms with a contingent of bees to start a new

colony, which sometimes happens.

At other times, it is the young queen who swarms, which seems to be nature's way of dealing with overcrowding.

Johnson said virgin queens do not have the pheromone that bonds workers, although it will be present after the mating flight of about three days. The new queen will be filled with enough semen from about 15 drones to lay eggs for the rest of her life.

If the virgin queen is unable to fly due to bad weather or some other conditions and remains unmated, she will become a "drone layer." That spells the death of a colony because there are no worker larvae and no replacement queen larvae, said Johnson.

He is now transitioning his Pure Honey business to Joe and Vinka Graves of Rice. At the age of 70, Johnson wants to travel more to help with bee production in other countries.

The Graves have two sons who are also learning the art of beekeeping.

"It is something we can do to give back to the community — and it is pretty fascinating," said Vinka while harvesting queen larvae to incubate for new colonies.

Johnson turned over 70 colonies to the Graves. He is now helping them create another 25 or so this year.

"I just feel like I've reached the top," he said of the decision to retire.

Johnson made that decision after spending last winter helping beekeepers in New Zealand and Holland. In recent years, his expertise in the field has led to requests for his help in setting up bee programs in India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cambodia, Nicaragua and Ghana.

"It's good to step away and get out of your comfort zone,"

he said of the adventures. "It gives you knowledge of values in another part of the world."

He returned from his recent trip to find that all but three of his hives had survived the winter, well over the average of 40%, which he credits to the hardy genetic makeup of the bees.

He is consulting with Washington State University on how to raise survivor stock. All of his knowledge is being passed on to the Graves through an apprentice program.

Bees don't like to leave the hive when its below 50 degrees, said Johnson, but they also don't like to defecate inside, so they can have major digestive problems by wintering in a cold environment. That is one of the challenges to overcome.

He said colonies must be kept dry and he covers his with black plastic for added insulation. The bees are fed a sugar-water mix during the busy season, but are left with enough honey to survive the winter.

Johnson said healthy colonies can fight off "murder hornets" or any other invaders, such as yellow jackets and wasps.

Although he has been stung more times than he can count, Johnson said bees tend to be relaxed if you are; they can smell fear on people and that riles them up.

Johnson has gotten at least 100 pounds of honey from each colony on a good year and it is sold at Meyers Market in Kettle Falls, and Richard's Nutrition and the Country Store in Colville.

"There's an intrinsic value to beekeeping that cannot be put into dollars and cents," he said. "But it is also true that if you take care of bees, they will take care of you."

Why you should see a financial advisor

The social distancing and stay-at-home orders necessitated by the coronavirus have led many of us to feel isolated.

Still, we've fought back through social media, "virtual" gatherings and walks in the neighborhood, where we could greet friends and neighbors (from 6 feet away). But when you're dealing with the financial effects of the virus and you're investing alone, you could encounter some problems that may prove costly.

Of course, with so much investment-related information available online, on television and in any number of periodicals, it's not surprising that some people feel they can invest without any assistance.

But the volatility of the financial markets over the past few months has also pointed to the dangers of going solo in the investment world.

And you might find that a professional financial advisor can help you in several ways, including the following:

- Taking emotions out of investing. During this period of market turbulence, many self-guided investors are letting their emotions drive their investment decisions. As a result, they sell investments when their price is down, "locking in" their losses. Furthermore, if they then stay out of the financial markets, they will miss out on the eventual recovery — and some of the biggest gains in market rallies usually occur right at the beginning.
- Maintaining perspective. When you're putting away money for the future

and you suddenly have a lot less of it, you might start to wonder if that future is somehow in jeopardy. But if you've been working with a financial advisor and following your investment strategy, you'll know that you don't have to immediately cash out those investments that have lost value, and you may not need to liquidate them for decades if they were designed for a long-term goal, such as retirement.

- Understanding the history of investing. The recent market instability is unique in the sense that its cause — a worldwide pandemic — is so highly unusual, and it hopefully will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Typically, prolonged market downturns are triggered by explainable financial or economic factors, such as the bursting of the "dot-com" bubble in 2000.

However, market drops of 20 percent or more — generally referred to as bear markets — are not at all unusual and have happened every few years over the past several decades.

Financial advisors are well aware of this history and share it with their clients. And for many people, the knowledge that "we've been here before" is reassuring and makes it easier for them to continue following their investment strategies.

The road to your financial goals is a long one, with many twists and turns. So you might like to have some experienced company along the way.

— This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Ron Eck, local financial advisor.

Is a stock you own in the news? Let's talk.



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